

26
A
S E R M O N
OCCASIONED BY THE
D E A T H
O F

ELIZABETH STAFFORD,

WHO DEPARTED THIS LIFE,

MARCH 29, 1774.

In the 15th YEAR of her AGE.

TOGETHER WITH

Some Anecdotes relating to her, both previous to,
and during her last Sickness.

By JOHN STAFFORD.

*—I know that my REDEEMER liveth, and that he shall stand
at the latter day upon the earth. And though after my skin
worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see GOD.
JOB xix. 25, 26.*

L O N D O N :

Printed for J. BUCKLAND, in Pater-noster-Row ; G. KEITH, in
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and W. HARRIS, N^o 70, St. Paul's Church-Yard,

MDCCLXXIV.

W. Musgrave!

WILLIAM STAFFORD

WHO DELETED THIS FILE

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Some Anecdotes relating to her, both previous to
and during her last sickness.

BY JOHN STAFFORD.

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JULY 1977

MY DEAR CHRISTIAN FRIENDS,

I HAVE often been called to weep with you, under afflictive, and bereaving dispensations: and I now promise myself a share in your sympathetic sorrows with me, and mine, under the great loss we have sustained. But as Aaron, when exercised with one of the most awful Providences that can befall a child of God, was commanded to go on with the work of the day, which teacheth us, That afflictions are sent to *quicken* us in duty, not to take us off from it: I shall attempt to carry on the work now before us, by complying with the request of my dear child, in recommending to your serious consideration the words of the apostle Paul, which you will find written,

2 Tim. i. 12.

—*For I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.*

I N a dying world,—in a dying hour, what can give equal support with the GREAT and GLORIOUS OBJECT here set before us? None but

an ALMIGHTY SAVIOUR can help us, when flesh and heart fail us. Happy soul, distinguished with a sense of interest in CHRIST, in its last moments! This was Paul's case, and it has often been the sweet experience of others in similar circumstances. May this be our comfort living and dying! With this view our Apostle recommends CHRIST to us, as having those two great qualifications, which we need in a Saviour, namely, Divine Power, and divine Faithfulness. "As
 " he is infinitely able, to keep what I have com-
 " mitted to him: so I am assured that my JESUS
 " is infinitely Faithful, and will not desert me;
 " and that his ransom is absolutely sufficient, and
 " cannot deceive me."

That these great things are spoken of the LORD JESUS CHRIST is evident from ver. 10. where we have both his name, and his office:
³³ He hath abolished death, and hath brought
³³ life and immortality to light, through the gos-
³³ pel.³³ In this cause Paul was called to suffer:
³³ Nevertheless,³³ says he, ³³ I am not ashamed:
³³ for I know whom I have believed, or *trusted*,
³³ and I am persuaded that he is able to keep
³³ that which I have committed unto him against
³³ that day.³³ Observe,

I. The Person of CHRIST is the great and glorious object of a sinner's hope towards God.

The PERSON of CHRIST: This is the delightful subject of the old and new testament. To HIM both the prophets and apostles give testi-
 mony,

mony, that in his name all that believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses ^a.

Here I am naturally led to say something concerning the Person of CHRIST, as also of the knowledge the Apostle had of him.

1. I am to speak of the Person of CHRIST. But, alas, how little do we know of him! This we know, and it is a great encouragement to our faith in him, that He is the MIGHTY GOD, the everlasting Father, and the Prince of peace ^b. And, indeed, were he not so great and glorious a Person, we could have no ground to trust in him: Nay, it would be an act of idolatry. But there is no danger of falling into idolatry: for the person of whom Paul speaks, though in his humbled state, was ^{ss} in the form of GOD, and ^{ss} thought it no robbery to be equal with GOD ^c. ^{ss} He is the brightness of the Father's glory, ^{ss} and the express image of his person ^d. ^{ss} And being a Person infinitely great and glorious, They that know him will put their trust in him: which leads me to consider,

2. The knowledge which the Apostle had of him. ^{ss} *I know whom I have believed.* ^{ss} I cannot apprehend that our Apostle, great as his knowledge of CHRIST was, was able to comprehend the infinite glories of his Person: for who by searching can find out him ^{ss} who is over all
^{ss} GOD

^a Acts xiii. 39.

^b Isa. ix. 6.

^c Phil. ii. 6. See this text vindicated against the Arians in my Sermons, p. 235—237.

^d Heb. i. 3.

" God blessed for ever, Amen." But this we maintain, that Paul knew so much of CHRIST both of his nature, and his office, as to give up his own soul into his hands, and also to recommend him to others. Yea, at the close of life, having had all possible opportunities of correcting his past mistakes, he recommends CHRIST more than ever. He cheerfully embraces every occasion to speak of his great LORD and Master; in this chapter, and frequently in this which was one of his last epistles. I might add, he even seems to triumph and glory in all his sufferings for the sake of CHRIST, which affords us one of the strongest external proofs we have of the truth of the Christian Religion.—His knowledge of CHRIST led him to give up himself, his soul, his body, all his worldly, and all his spiritual, and eternal interests into the Redeemer's hands.

It may be here inquired, " What did Paul see in CHRIST so as to lead him thus to give up all his most important concerns to him?" I answer. His ALMIGHTY POWER was undoubtedly one ground of encouragement. " He is able." " There are two things," says the learned Grotius, " which are requisite to assist our faith" in this solemn transaction; the one is power; and here it is in my text; " He is able." " The other is fidelity," and the Apostle sees it in CHRIST, as *keeping* that which is committed to him. " I know him," says the
the

the Apostle, " though the world does not, I
 " know what a great, glorious and faithful per-
 " son he is, how *able*, and how *willing* he is to
 " keep my soul, and preserve it unto his hea-
 " venly kingdom and glory. His wisdom,
 " power, love, and faithfulness, are so illuf-
 " trious, that I cheerfully give up my everlast-
 " ing ALL to him, not doubting the GREAT
 " EVENT."

Now as his Power is supported by his Deity,
 so his faithfulness belongs to his office. I grant
 that we cannot justly argue from CHRIST's power
 to his will; but when the power of his divine
 Person is united with his office as a Saviour,
 what have we to fear? His office as a Saviour,
 includes in it the whole of our Redemption; his
 perfect Righteousness, and his atoning Sacrifice;
 his sanctifying SPIRIT, and his bringing us to
 the everlasting inheritance of the Saints in light.

If any inquire, How Paul gained that know-
 ledge of CHRIST, we might answer, It was by
 the gift of God. If we inquire into the way
 and means whereby it was communicated, we
 answer, By the word, and by the SPIRIT of
 God. There is nothing in our text but may be
 found in many other passages of sacred writ:
 But forasmuch as many have some notions
 about CHRIST who never gave up their souls to
 him to be saved, it is evident that the LORD the
 SPIRIT as the glorifier of CHRIST, gave our
 Apostle such views of the person, and qualifica-
 tions of CHRIST as to lead him to make choice
 of

of him as his only Saviour; And by long experience of CHRIST's care and faithfulness, he was encouraged with greater cheerfulness to confide in him even until death.

II. Observe, It is the duty and interest of poor sinners to commit their immortal ALL into the hands of the Redeemer.

That which Paul did, must we do, if we would have CHRIST to be our Saviour. " I know whom I *have believed*," or trusted; and he tells us what he meant by believing when he adds, " I have *committed*," or *entrusted* my ALL " to " Him."

Many are the descriptions of true faith in the word of God, and they are in general so plain that he who runs may read them: yet we have had so many and such strange and contradictory definitions given of it, by men who have embraced some favorite hypothesis, that many true christians have thought there is no question more difficult than to determine what true faith is. But it is very observable, that in the scripture no such question is ever proposed. It seems rather to be taken for granted, that we may as well know, by the descriptions given of it, what faith is, as any other grace or duty. Sometimes it is described by looking, Isa. xlv. 22. by eating and drinking, John vi. 53. by coming, Mat. xi. 28. by hungering and thirsting, Mat. v. 6. by flying for refuge, and laying hold on the hope set before us, Heb. vi. 18. by receiving

CHRIST

CHRIST, John i. 12. and, generally, in the old testament, by trusting, and this is the idea in my text, than which nothing can be more natural or familiar. How then comes it to pass, that the minds of believers have been so unsettled with respect to the nature of saving faith? Is it because we have such variety of expression? This, one would think might greatly tend to elucidate the subject.

After all I have said, perhaps, some may be ready to renew the inquiry, "What are these actings of the mind and heart which constitute the duty of believing?" Or in other words, "In what kind of language does faith express itself in going out of itself committing its everlasting ALL to the LORD JESUS CHRIST." Now here, for the sake of variety, I will recommend to you the words of a pious writer, which I have often read with pleasure. "This act of faith," (says he) "sometimes runs very low with a serious christian. "It may be so on a man's first believing; and "sometimes a great while after, in an hour of "spiritual darkness and desertion: whereupon, "if we could but stand at his closet-door, we "might over-hear him breaking forth into some "such language as this: "My sins are many, "and my danger is great, and my fears are "proportionable to both. What will become "of me to all eternity God only knows. But "yet however, there is salvation for lost sinners "through the blood of a Redeemer; though "I am so far from having an assurance of an

“ interest in it, that I am terribly afraid I never
 “ shall. Many discouragements break in like
 “ wave after wave on my distressed soul, and I
 “ have much ado to keep my head above water,
 “ yea it is often covered by it ; yet I see a safe
 “ harbour ; but LORD, at how great a distance
 “ am I from it, so that I can but just perceive
 “ it ! Oh that I could but swim to it ! Well, I
 “ will make towards it, though I fear I shall
 “ sink long before I reach it. But however I’ll
 “ try what rich, soveraign, free grace will do.
 “ If I am indeed the vilest sinner that ever was ;
 “ then CHRIST never yet had so fair an oppor-
 “ tunity of shewing his tender love, his infinite
 “ power, his unshaken faithfulness, and the
 “ value and efficacy of his blood, in all their
 “ beauty and glory, as now he has. What
 “ though I am an obscure person, and should
 “ never have the opportunity of publishing it
 “ on earth ? yet it will not die as a secret in
 “ my bosom : the happy tidings will run through
 “ the heavens ; and the blessed inhabitants above
 “ will wonder at his exceeding abundant grace
 “ overflowing to me ; and sing hallelujahs to
 “ the LAMB of GOD on my account. And
 “ though CHRIST at the last day will be admir-
 “ ed and glorified in all his saints ; yet if I be
 “ found among them, I shall more signally a-
 “ dorn his triumph than any one besides. I
 “ will therefore venture into his presence, cast
 “ myself into the *arms* of his mercy : but that’s
 “ too proud and saucy a word ; I would rather
 “ say,

“ say, I will throw myself at his *foot*. If he
 “ spurn me away, I can but die then. But it
 “ may be he may stretch out the sceptre of his
 “ grace to me, and then I shall live : and who
 “ can tell, but he will ? But if not, *if I perish,*
 “ *I perish*. So I must, if I don’t apply to him.
 “ Therefore though he should *Slay me*, *I will*
 “ *put my trust in him*. If I die, I’ll die laying
 “ hold on the horns of this altar. If ever help
 “ come, I know it must be in this way ; here
 “ therefore I am resolved to abide, come on’t
 “ what will, I’ll wait the issue of it, and see how
 “ it may please the most compassionate lover of
 “ souls to deal with mine *.”

In a word, saving Faith includes in it such a
 knowledge of CHRIST’s ability and faithfulness,
 as leads it to depend alone upon him, for salva-
 tion : or, according to my text, It is a commit-
 ting of the soul into the hands of CHRIST as an
 able and a faithful Saviour. Observe,

III. That all, who commit their souls into the
 hands of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, may rest assured
 that he will take the care of them upon himself to
 their everlasting salvation : “ I am *persuaded* that
 “ he is ABLE to keep that which I have committed
 “ unto him.” Here was a sacred deposit †, or
 trust,

* Vid. Mr. N Taylor on the nature and necessity of
 Faith in JESUS CHRIST. p. 42—45.

† The word παραθήκην attice παρακαταθήκην μιν (from πα-
 ρακατατίθεμι) literally signifies *committing in trust* : Hence it is

trust, his soul, his body, his ALL; It is called by this term because it is *given, placed, entrusted,* with GOD in CHRIST.

Here was not merely a faint hope, but a strong, a lively, and cheerful confidence, or a full and unshaken persuasion; and the ground of this faith will most assuredly support us: for we may well argue as Bernard does, “ He that
 “ hath chosen and adopted us into his family,
 “ will maintain his purposes and fulfil all his
 “ promises.” Or with Austin, “ Can we be
 “ more safe than when wholly in the hands of
 “ our covenant-God?” “ The ship,” says one,
 “ that is part in the water, and part run aground
 “ is soon beat to pieces.” “ Let him that died
 “ for my soul,” said Luther, “ see to the sal-
 “ vation of it.” Have we, indeed, committed
 our

applied to the Gospel which was entrusted with Timothy to dispense to others. 1 Tim. vi. 20. 2 Tim. i. 14. This may be called the *deposit of GOD*. Hence some have supposed our text to refer to the Christian-Doctrine: But neither does this answer to the design of the Apostle’s argument: nor will the original phrase (*παρὰ ἀλάθειαν μου*) bear such a construction: For it signifies the *deposit of man*. The verb (*παρὰ ἰδναι*) is used in several places to denote committing of Persons to GOD, Acts xiv. 23. & xx. 32. And it is elsewhere applied to the committing the *soul* to GOD, Luke xxiii. 46. & 1 Pet. iv. 19. To which I might add, that Zenophon, Memorab. Lib. iv. cap. 4 §. 17. has used the same word as the Apostle in my text for *committing* any thing in *trust*; “ *παρὰ ἀλάθειαν*, alicui aliquid, tanquam depositum
 “ tradere; quod de iis rebus dicimus, quos fidelissimè, sanc-
 “ tissimeque custodire volumus, tanquam cum alicui liberos
 “ commendamus.”

our souls, yea, our everlasting ALL into the Redeemer's hands? Let us dismiss our slavish, and our anxious fears; ^{ss} for he is faithful that hath ^{vi} promised^f.^{ss} O how abundantly hath God provided both for the safety and comfort of his people: for their safety, in his eternal purpose, counsel and covenant; in the constitution of the Person of CHRIST, and in the confirmation of all the blessings of grace, and of glory, by his promise, and his oath. ^{ss} Wherein God, willing ^{ss} more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of ^{ss} promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed *it*, or interposed (margin) himself by an ^{ss} oath: that by two immutable things, in which ^{ss} *it was* impossible for God to lie, we might ^{ss} have a strong consolation, who have fled for ^{ss} refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us: ^{ss} which *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul ^{ss} both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the vail, whither the forerunner ^{ss} is for us entered, *even* Jesus made an high-priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec^g.^{ss}

Is it possible for any to know these things, to rest their souls upon them, to live upon them by meditation, faith and prayer, in their daily walk and converse with God, and yet be at a loss to conceive how the Apostle could maintain this firm persuasion as to say, ^{ss} I know whom I have believed? ^{ss} What room could there be for doubting? May we not all, having committed our souls to CHRIST, and yet saying with the disciples in a storm,

^f Heb. x. 23.^g Heb. vi. 17—20.

storm, " Master, carest thou not that we perish^h? " may we not hear CHRIST himself reproving us in those striking words, " Why are ye so fearful ? " " How is it that you have no faith ? " " O thou " of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubtⁱ ? " Is thy faith built upon the MIGHTY GOD, whose wisdom is unsearchable, whose love is infinite, and whose faithfulness is unchangeable ? And is not the foundation sufficient to support you ? " Oh thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, *and* not " comforted^k, " behold the foundation, the glorious foundation, which GOD hath laid in the Person of CHRIST ! Have you not found it all-sufficient as far as you have made use of it ? Try it again ; " CHRIST is the same yesterday, to day, " and for ever^l. " How many poor guilty souls have safely rested their everlasting all upon him ! what relief have they found both in life and death ! Why then do we fear and tremble ? Surely there must be some mistake, if not in the nature of our faith, yet, either in its actings, or at least in our reflections upon them !

Now as to the actings of saving faith upon CHRIST, I have described them as plainly as I can : I call upon you to inquire, whether the defect lies in the actings of your faith, or in your reflections upon it. Does your faith receive the LORD JESUS CHRIST as your atoning sacrifice, as your everlasting righteousness, and as your all-sufficient strength, whether for doing,

or

^h Mar. iv. 38.
^l Heb. xiii. 8.

ⁱ Matt. xiv. 31.

^k Isa. liv. 11.

or suffering the will of God ? Possessed of these, what can harm you ? His sacrifice is your security against offended justice ; His righteousness your title to eternal life ;—His strength your defence against all your enemies ;—your freedom from the love and power of sin ;—and it shall be your deliverance from all its dreadful and destructive consequences.

IV. Observe, This great and glorious object the LORD JESUS CHRIST believed on is the grand, the only support of all true believers in all the prospects that lie before them.—“ For I know
 “ whom I have believed, and I am persuaded
 “ that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him *against that day.*”

1. We must inquire, What that day is to which our Apostle refers.

It is generally believed, that our Apostle looks forward to the final judgment, which is *that day*, by way of eminence, in which the works of all other days shall be reviewed ; that day, in which every service, and every suffering for CHRIST shall be remembered, and be graciously rewarded.

Now it is with the greatest propriety that our Apostle so frequently refers to this day, in almost all his epistles, because then CHRIST shall make it fully appear, that he has been both ABLE and FAITHFUL in keeping whatever has been committed to him. Though we have been doubtful and anxious about that great event,
 “ He abideth faithful ; He cannot deny himself.”

The

The souls of believers which had been committed to his care, shall then appear with inconceivable glory; whether they had been a longer or shorter space in his presence, they shall be brought forth as the purchase of his blood, arrayed in robes of light and immortality.

In the 18th verse of this Chapter, our Apostle again speaks of this great day, in his prayer for Onesiphorus; "The LORD grant unto him that he may find mercy of the LORD in that day." Sometimes it is called, by way of emphasis, *the day of CHRIST^m, the great dayⁿ*, and very frequently *the day of judgment*.

2. Let us further inquire, What prospects present themselves in the view of that day, which tend to reconcile them to death, yea, enable them to triumph over it as a conquered enemy.

There is, it must be owned, something in death which appears ghastly and dreadful; It is called, "the king of terrors^o." And, perhaps, it may sometimes appear in this form to the saints and people of GOD; but this can never happen, while faith views the triumphs and victories of him into whose keeping it hath committed itself. When believers can say with Paul, "I know whom I have believed," they can look death in the face without fear or dread; yea, with desire and delight, saying, with good old Jacob, "I have waited for thy salvation, O LORD^p." Their whole persons are under the care of CHRIST:
They

^m Phil. i. 6, 10.

ⁿ Jude, ver. 6.

^o Job xviii. 14.

^p Gen. xlix. 18.

They may, therefore, say with Job, ^{ss} I know
^{ss} *that* my Redeemer liveth, and *that* he shall
^{ss} stand at the latter *day* upon the earth. And
^{ss} *though* after my skin, *worms* destroy this *body*,
^{ss} yet in my flesh shall I see GOD : whom I shall
^{ss} see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold,
^{ss} and not another ; *though* my reins be consumed
^{ss} within me ^{q. ss} Therefore my heart is glad,
^{ss} and my glory rejoiceth ; my flesh also shall rest
^{ss} in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in
^{ss} hell, ^{ss} or the unseen world ; neither ^{ss} wilt
^{ss} thou suffer thine holy ONE to see corruption.
^{ss} Thou wilt shew me the path of life : in thy
^{ss} presence *is* fulness of joy, at thy right hand
^{ss} *there are* pleasures for evermore ^{r. ss} Into
^{ss} thine hand, ^{ss} therefore, ^{ss} I commend my spi-
^{ss} rit : thou hast redeemed me, O LORD GOD of
^{ss} truth ^{s. ss}

3. These things may well support all those who know that they have believed in CHRIST, or committed their everlasting ALL to him against that day.

This was the comfort and joy of our Apostle in the near views of death. ^{ss} To me to live is
^{ss} CHRIST : and to die is gain. ^{ss}——^{ss} having a
^{ss} desire to depart, and to be with CHRIST,
^{ss} which is far better ^{r. ss} For I am now ready
^{ss} to be offered, and the time of my departure
^{ss} is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I
^{ss} have finished my course, I have kept the faith.

C

^{ss} Hence-

^q Job xix. 25.
^r Phil. i. 21, 23.

^r Psal. xvi. 9—11.

^s xxxi. 5.

^{ss} Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of
^{ss} righteousness, which the LORD, the righteous
^{ss} judge shall give me at that day : and not to
^{ss} me only, but unto all them also that love his
^{ss} appearing ^u.^{ss} Now as these prospects were
 presented to him, not merely as an Apostle, but
 chiefly as a Christian ; so we well know that
 many others have adopted his language, and an-
 ticipated his hopes in their dying moments.
 Having committed their souls to the same AL-
 MIGHTY SAVIOUR, and being favored with the
 aids of the same blessed SPIRIT, bearing witness
 with their spirits as the children of GOD, they
 have triumphed over death and the grave, say-
 ing, ^{ss} O death, where *is* thy sting ; O grave,
^{ss} where is thy victory ? The sting of death *is*
^{ss} sin, and the strength of sin is the law : but
^{ss} thanks *be* to GOD, who giveth us the victory,
^{ss} through our LORD JESUS CHRIST ^w.^{ss}

I might exemplify this happy temper, by re-
 ferring you to the dying words of many of the
 Martyrs, and others ; but these things need no
 proof to those, who have been conversant with
 their lives, as recorded by others, and handed
 down to us, for our encouragement in a dying
 hour. Nor have these favors been denied to
 younger christians, or even unto babes in
 CHRIST ; as will appear by some anecdotes
 which I shall subjoin to my present discourse.

But before I enter upon them, suffer me to
 remind you, that as it is not my usual method
 to

^u 2 Tim. iv. 6—8.

^w 1 Cor. xv. 55—57.

to give encomiums of the dead, so I shall be altogether silent upon that subject, on the present occasion : However, as many of you well know that the dear deceased child stood proposed, as a member, to this church, and as she had prepared an account of God's gracious dealings with her, to be laid before you, had life been continued, and as I think the church has an undoubted right to it, I will endeavor to give you the substance of it : And, Oh! that it may, through the divine blessing, tend to encourage others, in their making an open profession of what God hath done for their souls !

Here follows the Account which she intended to give of herself to the Church.

IT pleased God, even from my infancy, to give me a discovery of my sinful state, both by nature and practice. I remember to have heard my father express his pleasure at my early convictions of sin, and earnest desire of an interest in his prayers for an interest in pardoning mercy. But alas ! those early and serious impressions did not continually abide upon my heart : but at times seemed to be intirely lost, and, I fear, I have often drunk iniquity like water.

But God, in his infinite Goodness, still followed me with awful thoughts of ETERNITY, which made sin, all sin bitter to my soul. Sometimes I have tried to divert my thoughts from this awful subject, and every thing else, which

was painful in the review : but still it was the will and pleasure of the most High, and blessed be his holy name, to follow me with deep convictions, and great remorse of conscience for sin, though, I fear, it was not so much because sin is a breach of the divine law, and an offence against God, as for the dreadful consequences of it, namely, my everlasting ruin !

For many years I looked upon religion as highly necessary ; but I found little heart to it while I was under these slavish fears. Nevertheless, I used to be greatly affected, and sometimes encouraged, by reading the Pilgrim's Progress ; from which, and by hearing the Word, by reading the Scriptures, and other good books, I was led into the truth as it is in Jesus : so that when I saw one, who is now a member with you, poring over a gloomy thought in Quarle's Emblems, I remember to have directed her to another poem, called Jesus, Justice, and the Sinner, as being better suited to her case, though I could then take little comfort from it myself *.

Often when I have been saying my Catechism to my parents, I have found deep impressions of eternal things made upon my mind ; and especially by hearing my father read a sermon of
Bishop

* The person referred to, has assured me that God was pleased to bless that Poem to her spiritual comfort, to which she was directed by a child ! I mention this to encourage religious conversation amongst all that fear God. See Mat. iii. 16.

Bishop Hopkin's, from Heb. x. 30, 31. " For
 " we know Him that hath said, Vengeance *be-*
 " *longeth* unto me, I will recompense, saith the
 " LORD. And again, The LORD shall judge
 " his people. *It is* a fearful thing to fall into
 " the hands of the living God." This, I think,
 is the most awakening discourse I ever read, or
 heard †.

Dr. Watts's Hymns have been of great use
 to me, first for awakening my fears, as particu-
 larly H. 2. Ild B.

" My thoughts on awful subjects roll,
 " Damnation and the dead ;
 " What horrors seize the guilty soul
 " Upon a dying bed." &c.

I have also been greatly encouraged by them,
 especially by the 85th. Ild B.

" Why does your face, ye humble souls,
 " Those mournful colours wear ?
 " What doubts are these that waste your faith,
 " And nourish your despair ?" &c.

I lament that I did not set down those discourses
 I have heard from my father, and others, both
 in

† This discourse I read in the family for the conviction
 of a thoughtless servant. Little did I think of its making
 such awful impressions upon a child who then could not be
 above six years of age : But God is a sovereign, O let the
 LORD be magnified.

in this place, and also at the Lecture, which gradually instructed, and directed me from time to time; as also the serious impressions made upon my mind by his observations at, and after catechizing, and praying with us, in his study, on LORD'S day evenings, as well as daily in the family: had I done this, I might have given a more particular and satisfactory account of what has passed in my heart from day to day.

Thus I went on, sometimes hoping, sometimes desponding: one thing which greatly encouraged my hope was the hearing my father read, in the family, a sermon by the late Mr. Davies; from Mat. xii. 20. "A bruised reed
" shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he
" not quench, till he send forth judgment unto
" victory; and in his name shall the Gentiles
" trust."

In July 1772, while my parents were gone into the country, my grandfather read one of Mr. Davies' sermons from Isa. xlv. 22. "Look unto
" me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth:
" for I *am* God, and *there is* none else." This had a tendency to renew my conviction of the need of an interest in CHRIST, without which my condemnation was sure. I suppose that my grandfather perceived my distress: for he recommended to me Dr. Doddridge's Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul. However, I did not set about it then, but afterwards his advice was brought to remembrance, and I set about it with diligence, and I have reason to bless God for it, that it has been,
in

in his hand, a great means of convincing me more and more of my need of a Saviour; and also of leading me to lay hold on the LORD JESUS CHRIST as my Righteousness.

Soon after this I heard my father preach several discourses from 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. "He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all *things* and sure; *this is* all my salvation and all *my* desire." The last sermon, I hope, I shall never forget: I was sorry when he had done with the subject. But these were followed with many sermons from Ps. xlii. 11. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, *who* is the health of my countenance, and my God." O how encouraging and delightful were they to my soul! By these discourses I was enabled to give up myself to GOD in CHRIST with some comfortable hope that I should never be founded.

Those sermons on Ruth i. 16. "Thy people *shall be* my people, and thy God, my God," were of great use to me to confirm me in my choice of GOD as my God. And I had many thoughts of giving up myself to GOD, in public; but I thought myself too young. Many are the difficulties which I met with, not knowing what to do*; but still I could often sing and say,

"Amazing

* Nov. 30, 1772. being Monday evening, "Near nine o'Clock

“ Amazing grace, that kept my breath,
 “ Nor bid my soul remove,
 “ Till I had learn’d my Saviour’s death,
 “ And well insur’d his love !”

Hymn 2. Ild B.

I am far from thinking, as some have done, that there are no pleasures in a life of religion : I have had many difficulties, and I expect many more ; but I can add my poor testimony, to that of many of the children of God, that I never found any true happiness till I became acquainted with the things of God. And I desire to bless and praise Him for the great mercy of a religious education.

Now as I would not leave any command of my LORD unfulfilled, or any means neglected which may be of use to me in my journey through this

o’Clock, my eldest Daughter came into my study, desiring to know whether she is too young to give herself up to the Church. I told her, 1. That we have no certain rule in the word of God as to the age of the persons whose duty it is to give up themselves to God in his Churches. 2. That it was no small pleasure for me to hear her making the inquiry, and that it reminded me of those words 2 Chren. vi. 8. “ Nevertheless thou didst well in that it was in thine “ heart.” 3. That I thought it would not be for her advantage to come to the Table of the LORD until she had spiritual knowledge to discern the LORD’s Body. 4. That it was a comfort to me to find her so constant and, I hoped, conscientious in the duties of retirement. 5. That it was impossible for me to give my advice till she had first given me some further, and more particular account of herself, which might be done either by conversation or by writing : Upon this she seemed to be satisfied.”

this world to that which is to come, I do offer myself for communion, to this Church of CHRIST, if they shall think me worthy: And if I should be admitted to join with you in commemorating the dying love of our dear Redeemer, I earnestly desire your prayers to God for me, that I may walk worthy the profession of CHRIST JESUS.

ELIZABETH STAFFORD.

You will, my Christian Friends, form your own judgment of these things: I choose that the dear deceased should speak in her own way; you will, however, recollect that she was not yet fifteen years of age! When I think on these things, I am constrained to say with the Psalmist, "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength, because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy, and the avenger." Ps. viii. 2.

There is no end of reflecting upon second causes: for we know that God doth whatsoever he pleaseth in the armies of heaven, and amongst the inhabitants of the earth. We profess to acknowledge his supremacy, and I desire, in all things, to submit cheerfully to his will.

One of my children, namely my second child, was soon taken with a threatening fever: blessed be God her life was spared; may she have grace to improve her recovery to the glory of God her preserver! This child, my eldest, was taken as soon as the other recovered. Her constitu-

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tion was weak, and unable to bear the shock. We had little hope of her when she was first taken. But I will not dwell upon these things. I proceed to give you some account of her triumphant victory over death.

She seemed desirous of knowing whether the physicians thought her case dangerous; we were unwilling to let her know our apprehensions, lest they should think her mind had been thrown into any perturbations, which might have proved detrimental. We, therefore, kept the apprehended consequence of her disorder out of her sight as long as we could: but when all hope was gone, we told her plainly that there was little hope of her recovery: she received the sentence of death not only without dread, but with apparent serenity and joy.

When any religious friends seemed sorrowful on her account, she always dropped some word of reproof to them, saying, "How can you do so? You, who know better, ought to set a better example."

Upon her being told that one of her relations seemed to be more thoughtful, and pensive than usual, her mother said, "Well, Betsey, if your affliction should be the means of their conversion, you would rather be glad to be afflicted;" to which she answered, "That I should."

I did not take down any other expressions till Saturday, March 26th. One of the first difficulties she proposed to me was this, That it was likely

likely she should be taken off by death before she came to the table of the LORD. I endeavoured to answer that difficulty by referring her thoughts to a text beforementioned, 2 Chron. vi. 8. "Forasmuch as it was in thine heart—
 "thou didst well in that it was in thine heart." To which she replied, "I know it was my duty; and I am sure God cannot be angry with me for doing my duty, and yet this thought has troubled me; but now I am satisfied."

I asked her whether any doubt remained as to her interest in CHRIST: she answered, in the words she had chosen for her Funeral Sermon, "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

I told her that I was glad to find the LORD enabling her to maintain her hold on CHRIST: for we had little hope of her continuance with us, and that we had given her up to a covenant God some days past; "Then," said she, "I have nothing to do but to wait till my change come: Then shall I see HIM whom my SOUL LOVETH; and when I see HIM, I have enough." These words were spoken with unusual vehemence. She added, "Then I shall no more sin against a sweet Saviour!—No more conflicts with sin, which you have so fully described, in your printed Sermons, which I bless God for, and which have often supported me when sinking into despair."

In a few minutes a fit of convulsions came on, which violently shook her whole frame; upon which she immediately sent for me again, out of my study, imagining that her end was near; she inquired, "What must we do in the last act of faith, when the soul is just going out of the body?" I told her we must do as Jonah did, chap. ii. 4. "Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight, yet I will look again toward thy holy temple:" (a passage which I had considered some time before), or, according to her favorite text, Once more to commit her soul into the hands of the blessed Jesus, saying, with the Psalmist, xxxi. 5. "Into thine hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O LORD God of truth." I told her what I once heard Dr. Doddridge say near the close of his life, "Were I to choose any words of human composition for my last, I would take those of my honored friend Dr. Watts. Hymn 90. B. II.

"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
 "On thy kind arms I fall:

She immediately took the hint, and added,

"Be thou my strength, and righteousness,
 "My JESUS, and my all."

These words were spoken with such an apparent hearty approbation of CHRIST, and confidence in him, as could not fail to make considerable impres-

impressions on the minds of all that stood by her.

Nevertheless, her time was not yet come ; As soon as she heard that her sisters were up, she sent for the three eldest of them one by one, took her leave of them, and gave them the best advice in her power. Then she sent for the servants separately, and addressed them according to their different characters : afterwards, she sent for some of her more distant relations, and addressed them as well as she was able : but as I was not present, I forbear.

Soon after, she sent for me to tell her, how long I thought she could live : I told her, we had nothing before us, but to wait the LORD's time, in the exercise of faith, and patience. She replied, " I have not so much patience as I thought I had." I desired her to look upwards for divine assistance, she said, " I do, and I will."

When she thought herself just expiring, she inquired whether the covenant of grace contained any special promises of freedom from pain in dying. I told her, though there are no absolute promises that we shall not feel the pains of death, yet there are many precious promises of special assistance in every time of need, particularly, that general promise, Isa. xli. 10. ^{ss} Fear thou ^{ss} not, for I *am* with thee : be not dismayed, for ^{ss} I *am* thy God : I will strengthen thee, yea, I ^{ss} will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee with ^{ss} the right hand of my righteousness, ^{ss} As ^{ss} thy

"thy days, *so shall* thy strength be." Deut. xxxiii. 25. That, in confidence of these promises, "we may boldly say, The LORD is my helper, I will not fear."—That David had said in the view of approaching death, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." Psal. xxiii. 4.—That the promises of CHRIST were intended for our comfort, whether living, or dying; especially that great promise, "My grace is sufficient for thee." 2 Cor. xii. 9.—That CHRIST's presence had been afforded to many, in such a manner, as to cause them to triumph over death.—That, indeed, some of the Martyrs were called to suffer a lingering death, even when their souls were in darkness: "Blessed be God," said she, "I am not in darkness: that is not my case!" I observed, that many of the LORD's people have been supported in dying agonies, by calling to mind what CHRIST endured for us, when he cried out, "My GOD, my GOD, why hast thou forsaken me?" Mat. xxvii. 46. That CHRIST was forsaken, that we might be received into everlasting embraces. "O," said she, "this is all, it is all my desire.

After she seemed to have comforted her heart with the consideration of these things, she met with another difficulty, and sent again for me; "O," said she, "What shall I now do? I cannot pray!" To which I replied, That I myself

self had been in the same circumstances, especially once when in a fever; and that I was unable to join one thought with another; she said, "That is my case: what shall I do now?" I answered, It is your mercy that you made conscience of prayer when you was able: you are also to consider that text, which was my comfort, in these circumstances, "We have an Advocate with the Father, JESUS CHRIST the righteous: And he is the Propitiation for our sins." 1 John ii. 2. Say then with our favorite Poet, Hymn 37. B. II.

Let Papists trust what names they please,
 Their Saints, and Angels boast;
 We've no such advocates as these,
 Nor pray to th' heav'nly host.

JESUS alone shall bear my cries
 Up to his Father's Throne:
 He, dearest LORD! perfumes my sighs,
 And sweetens ev'ry groan.

"Well," said my dear Child, "I am not afraid of death, but of the pains of dying; Is there any way to mitigate, if not to get rid of them?" I answered, There is a certain way of mitigating them, by considering that CHRIST felt them;—By his death we are delivered from the curse, which had otherwise attended them, and which would have rendered them dreadful.—We have reason to be thankful
 that

that the curse is removed by the death of CHRIST. Again, If JESUS died, he well knows what dying agonies mean ; It may be with this view that he says, Rev. i. 18. " I *am* HE that liveth, and was
" dead ; and behold, I am alive for evermore,
" Amen ; and have the keys of hell, and of
" death."

" JESUS can make a dying bed
" Feel soft as downy pillows are,
" While on his breast I lean my head,
" And breathe my life out sweetly there."

H. 31. B. II.

" Well," said she, " this is what I want."

These hints contain the substance of what passed between us on Saturday. On the LORD'S-day, there was a tendency to dozing the greatest part of the day ; only she told me, she was afraid we had not given her up, which she thought was the reason of so long a delay : I assured her that she was mistaken—that we had resigned her two or three days ago, and that I had not prayed for her life that day in public. " Well," said she, " then I am satisfied."

Monday she lay much in the same way, and all we could wish, or pray for, was an easy, and quiet dismissal. She could speak little, so as to be understood, till about seven o'clock in the evening ; when, collecting all the little strength she had, she burst out, in a delightful triumph, " For ever, for ever, for ever blessed be thy
" name

name that thou hast received me.—In the Beloved — In the Beloved.” — About twelve o’clock she again broke out in these strains, which were some of the last words that could be understood, “GLORY! GLORY!” and then, between twelve and one on Tuesday morning, sweetly fell asleep in JESUS.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. Let parents learn to give up their infant-
seed to God, and do all in their power to bring
them up for him.—“Bring up your children in
the nurture and admonition of the LORD.” I
know it has been objected, “That though we
are instrumental of bringing them into the
world, we cannot form their minds into an
heavenly temper.” I grant it, yet I must add,
duty is ours, the blessing is of the LORD. The
food we give them cannot nourish them without
the divine blessing. If we think it our duty to
procure for them those things which belong to
the body, why should we not be more solicitous
to provide for their precious and immortal souls?

As they are born in sin, and every religious
parent cannot but perceive a tendency in them to
sin, why should not we endeavor to point out to
them these evil propensities, and lead their infant-
minds to that relief which is provided for them
in God’s gracious covenant? He has said, “I
will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after
thee.” “This blessing of Abraham is come
upon the Gentiles through JESUS CHRIST.”
Let us remind our children of their privileges,

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and

and teach them to improve them, that they may not despise their birthright; but may come to God as their God in covenant, and say with David, " Truly I am thy servant, the son of " thine hand-maid." O my dear friends, do all in your power to lead them to God, as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Plead the many great and precious promises made unto you, and unto them:—pray, earnestly pray with them, and for them, that they may have grace to improve them. Embrace the first openings of their minds to receive instruction; and, as you desire any success, let your life and conversation convince them, that there is a reality in those precious truths you are daily laying before them.

2. Let my young friends learn, from what has been said, to give up themselves to God without delay.

God, you see, calls some away in the bloom of life; are you ready? Have you embraced the God of your fathers? Death may come to you as well as to others, in the early part of life. " Be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye " think not, the Son of man cometh." Is it not your highest wisdom to be found ready? Say not in your heart, " It is soon enough yet." Do you know the time when God will call you? Have not others been called before you? Oh do not trifle with things of everlasting moment! " Seek ye the LORD while he may be found," &c. " Remember now thy Creator in the " days of thy youth, while the evil days come

" not,

" not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt
 " say, I have no pleasure in them." CHRIST
 the LORD hath said, " I love them that love
 " me, and they that seek me early shall find
 " me." " Now is the accepted time; behold
 " now is the day of salvation." " To day, if
 " ye will hear his voice," while he is calling to
 you, by an awful dispensation, " harden not
 " your hearts, lest he swear in his wrath, ye shall
 " not enter into my rest." If any of the chil-
 dren of religious parents reject the God of their
 fathers, let them remember, that our LORD him-
 self has declared, that in such a case, even " the
 " children of the kingdom shall be cast out :—
 " there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

3. Let all, who have given up themselves to
 GOD in CHRIST, labour to get such an acquaint-
 ance with the Power and Grace of CHRIST, as
 cheerfully to depend upon him in life, or in death.
 Do you, indeed, love CHRIST? Seek to know
 more and more of him. Young disciples are
 often filled with doubts and fears: and even
 some, who have long ago committed their souls
 into his hands, are too ready to entertain doubts
 and fears, suspicions and jealousies concerning
 him in whom they have believed. Not so did
 our Apostle; let us learn to imitate his example.
 The more we know of CHRIST, the more readily
 shall we trust him. And, truly, he is worthy of all
 the trust we can repose in him. Surely we can-
 not question his Power, for he is Almighty; and
 to question his willingness, is contrary to the
 whole of his undertakings. If he were not wil-

ling to save sinners, why did he leave his heavenly glories, and come down to suffer in a sinful world? What can be the meaning of all his gracious invitations? Why did he make so many precious promises? What is the language of the tears he shed? What is the meaning of his heart, in the pouring out his soul, even unto death, but to encourage poor sinners to come to him, to live upon him, and confidently expect salvation in his name?

4. Let us learn to dismiss all our needless fears, saying with the Apostle, "I know whom I have believed." If we know CHRIST, let us put all our trust in him: this is the way to triumph over death. If GOD can make others, yea, a babe in CHRIST, to gain a glorious victory over death, where is our faith, where are our hopes, that we cannot triumph in him, who hath loved us, and given himself for us? "Out of the mouth of babes he hath perfected his praise." O let us chide our unbelieving fears: for GOD seems, by the present providence, to be reproofing them: let us take part with GOD against them, and banish them for ever! Let us raise our faith to the expectation of great things from CHRIST, living and dying. Are we to continue a little longer in life? let us "live by the faith of the Son of GOD, who loved us, and gave himself for us." Are we drawing near to the decline of life, and the gates of the grave? let us expect suitable help from CHRIST. If CHRIST died, then he well knows what dying agonies mean, and will surely give us all needful help in dying moments. Is he

he alive? he will intercede for us to his Father, and our Father, to his God, and our God.

5. Let these things reconcile us to the death of godly relatives, and friends. Did they know to whom they entrusted all their concerns? Are we in no pain about their eternal state? Let us dry up our tears, and banish our sorrows. Why did we wish them to live, but that they might live to the LORD? and is it not much better to live for ever with him? Is not God able to do much better for them than we can? Is God pleased? Is his glorified creature pleased? Who then are we that we should be displeased? Do we lament our own loss? What loss can they sustain, who have nothing greater, nothing higher in view, than that God in all things may be glorified? And as for any particular circumstances, on which nature is apt to dwell, what are they in comparison with the greatest, highest, and best end of all, the DIVINE GLORY?

And, surely, the consideration of their present and everlasting felicity, may serve as an additional help to reconcile us to the death of godly relatives. "Blessed are the dead which die in the LORD, from henceforth: Yea, saith the SPIRIT, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them." It is true, natural affection is ready to suggest a thousand wishes for their stay, when they are godly, "We need their prayers, and their examples.—A thousand tender ties are broken by such a painful providence!—Alas, the bloom of youth, affording a thousand pleasing hopes of future
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“ comfort, is blasted ! ” But what is our comfort compared with their happiness ? It is true, “ they might have been useful to others, had “ they been continued ; they might become honorable members of a christian-society.” Was this their intention ? O what a gracious and joyful disappointment ! That instead of their struggling long through unknown trials and temptations with the church-militant, they are called to the church-triumphant ; from a feast with CHRIST on earth, to a better feast in heaven ; from the supper of the LORD, seldom returning, and often interrupted, to perpetual and everlasting enjoyment ! What a glorious exchange ! What a delightful surprise ! Instead of sitting down at the table of the LORD, with a few imperfect saints upon earth, to be seated at the marriage supper of the LAMB, with Patriarchs and Prophets, with Apostles and Martyrs, with the general assembly and church of the first-born, with God the judge of all, and with Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant—out of all danger from a sinful nature, a tempting devil, and an ensnaring world—under the full beams of the Sun of Righteousness, and the gracious smiles of a reconciled God and Father, amidst surrounding angels, rejoicing over their precious charge, conducted safe to glory.—Who can take a view of these things, and not feel the most ardent longings after the same blissful immortality ? Is it not highly probable, that many of CHRIST’s disciples in the early ages of the church, would have rejoiced in so great a privilege, so
speedy

speedy a dismissal from their warfare, and the crown of life bestowed after so short a combat : especially when their trembling hearts were ready to say, " I shall one day perish by the unwearied " and malicious enemies of my soul." Some of our christian-friends must bear the burden and heat of the day, and endure a multitude of formidable assaults ; others, highly indulged, only just enter upon the christian-warfare, but ere they have advanced to the hottest part of the battle, are called off by their great leader, to receive their immortal crown. O what wisdom and mercy unite, in making a way for their early escape, not only from one temptation, but from all at once, and for ever ! O how they now admire and adore his tender care, and distinguished mercy, who not only taught them to know and trust him, but also took effectual methods to prevent their ever forgetting him, or so much as losing their first love ! What a multitude of sins and sorrows, of doubts and fears are hereby prevented ! O how are they bowing before the throne of GOD and the LAMB, giving thanks for those very dispensations, which fill us with pain and grief ! What are we doing ? O that every mistake may be rectified ! What mighty difference is it whether we obtain admission into heaven before our dear friends and relatives, and so give them an hearty welcome when they arrive thither, or whether they shall have the honor and happiness, under CHRIST, to receive us into those holy and heavenly habitations ?

To conclude, Let all who know whom they have believed, wait patiently for CHRIST, until he shall come and receive them to himself. To such souls, while they reflect on the happiness of those who are gone before them, and especially if they are favored with the delightful prospects of another world, the time may seem long, but Oh, let every part of it be filled up with love and duty to CHRIST: and when our dissolution approaches, let us rejoice in him who saith, " Surely I come quickly;" while our joyful hearts reply, " Amen. Even so, come LORD JESUS."

THE END.



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